



Impacts of Finnish cooperation in the Mexican policy making process: From the community forest management to the liberalization of forest services



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is highlight how Mexican-Finnish forestry cooperation (1982–1994) supported major shifts in Mexican national forest policy, by identifying the policy changes and relating these to the strategy taken by the cooperation program. We based our analyses in two proposals: four pathways of influence as well as context-specific impact study. The methodology was carried out through a context-specific impact study; it consisted of describing changes in Mexican society and the history of the forest policy with the aim of understand the contribution of the Finnish-Mexican cooperation. The information was collected following 3 steps: 1) collecting historical data in Mexico and from the archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland; 2) interviews with Finnish and Mexican forestry experts involved in the cooperation interventions and 3) validating by contrasting sources. In conclusion, we found that Finnish cooperation had direct effects on Mexican forestry policy in terms of helping the incorporation of CFM in national forestry planning. At the same time, the cooperation program went deeper and shaped wider objectives, mainly through training and the mutual learning of Mexican and Finnish participants.

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1. Introduction

Over the last four decades, communities in developing countries have gained increasing rights to use the forests in their own territories, but this does not necessarily mean that they have been able to benefit fully from the forest resources (Thoms, 2008; Mustalahti and Lund, 2009; Oyono et al., 2012; Jagger et al., 2014; Chomba et al., 2015). In fact, there have been heavy restrictions on how communities can use their forests and there has been a continuing struggle for more rights and a higher share of the benefits, which to some extent continues up to today (Larson and Ribot, 2007; Poteete and Ribot, 2011; Green and Lund, 2015; Scheba and Mustalahti, 2015). In Mexico, opinions on the extent to which communities should have control and autonomy in forest management remain contested. There is on-going tension between proponents of central control versus community control, which to some extent also reflects the underlying dilemma between management for conservation and management for production. Various means have been used by policy makers to justify centralization, for example Ojha (2006) argues that the processes of scientisation create a ‘techno-bureaucratic doxa’ that makes the democratic control of forest

resources by citizens difficult. Similar arguments relating to depoliticisation and anti-politics (Ferguson, 1990) have also been raised by scholars of international development studying the governance of natural resources (see for example Goldman, 2003; Kothari, 2005; Wilson et al., 2006; Scheba and Mustalahti, 2015).

In this context it is interesting to note that international cooperation in the forestry sector in Mexico has sometimes had the explicit objective of strengthening communities and allowing them more space for negotiation with government, as in the case of German cooperation with the Plan Piloto in Quintana Roo (Galletti, 1999), and in the case of a self-management tool designed for forest owners (‘System of Conservation and Forest Development’, SICODESI), in the Mexico-Finland cooperation program 1982 to 1994.

However, international cooperation can also influence forest policy in a more general sense. Indeed, this is often a hidden motive behind donor finance for development interventions (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012; McEwan and Mawdsley, 2012; Böcher, 2012). The aim of this paper is highlight how Mexican-Finnish cooperation supported major shifts in Mexican national forest policy, by identifying the policy changes and relating these to the strategy taken by the program. In this respect, it tries to explain the two way effects of Mexican-Finnish bi-lateral cooperation and, in particular, its influence on Mexican community forest policy. In the following, we first describe the historical context and analytical framework, then methods used, before outlining

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our key findings in relation to the analytical frame; and finally we present our conclusions.

2. Historical context and analytical framework

Currently 51% of the national territory is under social tenure and around 5% is held by national government (in the form of conservation areas and nature reserves). Around 55–60% of the forest falls within the legally defined communally managed territories (Madrid et al., 2009). Forest tenure was strongly impacted by the first land repartition under President Lazaro Cardenas (1934–1940), in which the government not only created *ejidos* (agrarian nuclei with communal ownership of land) for the landless, but also supported the restitution of their original communal lands to indigenous groups in the form of *comunidades indigenas* (CIs) (Escárcega, 1990). While this resulted in an increase in social tenure of forests (Merino and Segura, 2004), Cedeño and Pérez (2005) note that in many cases there was no space for the participation of the rural communities in any forestry activities; instead, a forest bureaucracy was established which controlled forest activity for several decades. In contrast, Boyer and Wakild (2012) point out that Cárdenas' socially progressive views were in principle not intended to support the imposition of forest bureaucracy; rather, the idea was to sustain Mexican development by taking into account the ecological function of nature, and to manage this through rural organizations under the direction of experts. Boyer and Wakild (2012) describe Cardenas' concept in this regard as “social landscaping”, a similar approach to the “social production” model which, as we will show, was applied forty years later.

However, the social policy scheme implemented by Cardenas was impossible to maintain in the long run without the participation of the private sector, favouring concessions schemes in later periods (Cárdenas, 1993). Private and parastatal companies were promoted under a government centralization scheme; the objective was to enhance productivity, leaving the communities without an active role in forest management, as was demonstrated in the forestry law of 1942. It clearly defined concepts related to forest activity and introduced Industrial Units for Forest Exploitation (UIEF, Unidades Industriales de Explotación Forestal), whose aim was increase productivity of logging by private or parastatal companies.

Although the concessions were mainly within the territories of *ejidos* and CIs, the owners of these forests were not involved in any way in decision making or management. By the 1960s forest communities started struggles all over the country, particularly in Chihuahua, Durango and Oaxaca (Merino and Segura, 2004), in the State of Mexico (Raufflet, 2005) and in Guerrero (Quintero, 2010). By this time, some communities had started to switch their demands, which had initially been for a greater share of the returns, to real self-control of their forests, and the overthrow of control by the concessions (Merino and Segura, 2004).

The first efforts towards social control of forest were made in the 1970s by the General Directorate of Forest Development (DGDF) of the Agriculture and Water Resources Secretariat (López-Arsola, 2004). The DGDF developed the concept of “socio-producción” (social production), which aimed at the creation of community forest entrepreneurs. Under this scheme several community enterprises were initiated, some of which were part of a plan which also involved parastatals or private concessions; for example, this department promoted the Union of Ejidos and Communities of Oaxaca (UCEFO), which was made up of communities that subsequently had an important role in developing forestry management, for example San Pedro el Alto, Pueblos Mancomunados, La Trinidad and Santa Catarina Ixtepeji (López-Arsola, 2004).

In this period, there was no coordination between national and state level planning in most sectors; this only began to change in 1980 with the so-called Global Development Plan. In forestry, the plan focused only on reforestation and employment, not on the planning or development of forest industry. But alongside the question of how timber was to

be exploited, forests in Mexico were heavily under threat due to the Programa Nacional de Desmonte (National Forest Clearance Program) (González, 1978), which was intended to clear forests for the expansion of large-scale, mechanized agriculture. There were huge losses in forest cover dating from these times and extending into the early 1980s, despite the fact that by the end of the 1970s a Planning Commission was set up to try to regulate the land use change.¹ The struggles of communities, the efforts of forest organizations and the Global Development Plan were all in conflict with the many government agencies that still supported the concessions and the hegemony of the associated technical services. However, together these struggles were the basis for the revoking of the renewal of the concessions, which occurred eventually in 1982. What started as a general struggle in governance finished with the enactment of a new forest law in 1986, which was known as the “social forest law” (Bray and Merino, 2004; López-Arsola, 2004). International forestry cooperation had an important influence via the organization of the 9th World Forestry Congress in 1985. This was organized around the theme “Forestry in the Integral Development of Society”, following a growing trend of concern for the social implications of forestry. As a result of the Congress, a strategy of donor assistance both technical and financial was initiated. In México, two donor countries developed cooperation programs: Germany via GTZ and Finland via FINNIDA. The case of German support via GTZ for the ‘Plan Piloto’ in Quintana Roo is much better documented and consequently better known in Mexico (Armijo et al., 2010). Its principal goals were to strength forest management at the community level by creating supra-*ejidal* organizations that could negotiate with government and support community-level enterprises. On the other hand, as we will show in what follows, the cooperation programs of Finland had different goals and took quite a different course.

Our analytical framework is based on Bernstein and Cashore (2012). They identify four pathways by which domestic policy may be influenced from outside by global forces (Table 1). This framework was for example used recently by Rahman et al. (2016) to assess the influence of donor interventions on forest policy in Bangladesh. Although one can see similar influences in Mexico related to *international norms and discourses on forest policy* (the so-called second pathway in Bernstein and Cashore, 2012), the case in question, as we will show in Section 5, mostly reflects the fourth pathway (*direct access to domestic policy making*). Associated with this fourth pathway, we have selected four core elements based on the Bernstein and Cashore (2012) article: 1) Influence can operate through *the provision of financial resources* to assist existing civil society organizations or to help create new organizations; 2) Direct influence on the domestic policy process can result from *international efforts to build learning fora and training* about how to produce improved environmental, social and economic performance ‘on the ground’; 3) Policy learning is likely to have influence when it *addresses specific questions that improve particular practices* (e.g. forest management practices) rather than larger issues, such as economic demands to convert natural forests to plantations; and 4) Interventions aimed to *help governments enforce or implement their own laws* are more likely to succeed than attempts to directly influence the passing of new legislation. These four core elements provide us with the analytical frame to understand how Mexican-Finnish cooperation supported major shifts in Mexican national forest policy.

3. Methodology

Our methodological starting point is based on Koponen and Mustalahti (2011); they acknowledge that it is impossible to measure the exact contributions of each causal factor but it is still possible to conduct an informed discussion of these factors by relating them to their

¹ DOF 1982. Manual del funcionamiento del Comité Planificador de Desmontes del Sector Agropecuario y Forestal. Accessed from: http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=4734350&fecha=20/05/1982

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